

The Dance of the Wolf

by DannyD

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Summary: Three months after "Sentinel Too"

The Dance of the Wolf

I'm dedicating this story to Jackie ...just because. Listen to the wolf, my friend!

>
The Dance of the Wolf

>by DannyD

>Three months later...

>The short intake of breath nearly escaped the Sentinel's attention. It was little more than a gasp, and a
stranger's ignorance would have probably mistaken it for a chuckle. Looking up from his morning ritual of

>preparing breakfast, Jim Ellison interpreted the sound for what it was, his ears tuning in on his young friend
taking a morning shower. Concern shone in his eyes, and he watched the closed bathroom door for a moment,

>waiting and listening.

>Blair's flashbacks had decreased but every now and then, the painful memories returned mostly induced by
everything associated with 'water'. The anthropologist struggled hard to cover those assaults to his soul, but

>Jim was always aware of them. The first time he'd found Blair crying in the shower. He'd thrashed around as
if to fight the flow coming from the showerhead, whimpering incoherently and begging with the detective not

>to hurt him. Not knowing what else to do, Jim had stepped into the shower. After turning off the dreadful
stream of water, he had sat beside the young man, not saying anything, just letting him feel his presence and

>occasionally patting his back or shoulder until the sobs subsided. Finally, Blair had gathered himself and,
after recognizing Jim crouching beside him, embarrassment had made him blush and he had hurried to

>apologize.

>"It's okay, Chief," Jim had replied with a warm smile in his voice.

"I'm here for you anytime you need me," he'd added reassuringly. Stressing words they'd hadn't needed before.

>
Wiping his eyes, Blair had quickly busied himself by grabbing a towel. "I know, Jim," was all he'd said.

>
It had been three months since Blair had almost died at that fountain at Rainier University. Drowned by

>someone to whom he'd innocently offered his help, by someone he thought he could trust. Alex Barnes.

>Remembering her name, her face, and the evil motives behind her big baby-blue eyes, Jim suddenly started
chopping the red pepper with a grim expression on his face. The knife felt so good in his hands, and he cut

>deeper and deeper into the flesh of the vegetable. He wanted to see her hurting, see her bleeding, see her
feeling the same pain Blair had to suffer. But Alex Barnes was dead, brought down by a single bullet from

>Megan Connor's gun when the female Sentinel had resisted arrest. Jim couldn't fight the feeling, the silent
wish hidden deep inside a dark corner of his heart, to have been the one to....kill her? No, that would haven't

>solved anything. He would never forget the crucial moment when he and his fellow co-workers and friends
had thought Blair was gone forever. The pain would ever be perceptible in his heart, and killing Alex Barnes

>wouldn't have brought relief. Murder was not justice.

>How hard must it have been for Blair? The ordeal of the attack, his fight for life and the physical recovery in
the hospital had been intense enough. But within a few days in May the two people, the two sentinels, he

>thought he could trust, had betrayed him.

>And Jim was one of them.

>Agitated by the memories Jim took the knife again and started working on another red pepper, chopping,
cutting. Imaging it was her.

>
The door to the bathroom opened. Jim raised his head and, at the same moment, the knife slipped and cut deep

>into his finger!

>"Damn it!" the Sentinel shouted. The sudden flash of pain distorted his face, and he pressed his other hand
over the bleeding finger.

>
"Jim!? What is it?" Blair asked, hurrying to his friend's side.

"Oh my god!" he exclaimed spotting the blood

>oozing from beneath Jim's fingers.

>Jim had closed his eyes for a brief second and forced his pain dial down. He felt Blair's hand on his back as
the young man directed him to the sink. "It's just a cut, Chief," he calmed his friend, but his eyes couldn't deny

>the throbbing pain he felt in his finger.

>Leaving the tap running, Blair carefully pulled Jim's hand under the cold water, washing the blood away
and gently inspecting the injury. Jim winced at the water hitting the cut, instinctively trying to jerk his hand

>away, but Sandburg was persistent and didn't loosen his grip. "It'll be over in a just a second, big guy," Blair
promised. He reached for a clean towel and tenderly wrapped Jim's entire hand in the cloth.

>
The old nickname brought a grin to Jim's face, and he held still while Blair vanished into the bathroom

>returning in a matter of seconds with a first aid kit.

>"What happened?" Blair asked tending the cut. "This will hurt," he

warned as he reached for the bottle of
alcohol.

>
"The red pepper and I had an argument," Jim joked. He hissed in pain when the liquid seemed to burn his >finger. His hand searched for a hold on Blair's shoulder until the sensation lessened.

>"Sorry," Sandburg winced in sympathy but never ceased the treatment. "So, you think you'd be the first man
defeated by a vegetable?"

>
Jim chuckled, flexing his finger after Blair'd wrapped it up in a much too long piece of band aid. "Yeah, but >she won't escape my unsparing revenge," he replied jokingly.

>Sharply, Blair's head came up and the blue eyes stared at Jim.

>She.

>***

>"Do you think you'll be ready for lunch at 12.30?" Jim asked throwing a worried glance at his partner.

>In the passenger seat of the truck Blair nodded, staring out the window, watching the scenery of Cascade
passing by in a rush. "Sure."

>
Jim turned at the traffic light, heading north to Rainier University. He focussed on his Guide's racing >heartbeat and frowned imperceptibly. All of a sudden, Blair had decided to go to the university today. It
would be the first time since.... Winter term would begin in two weeks, but Jim was still utterly surprised by

>Blair's idea. He'd thought, he'd hoped, they would do it together, that they would gather the courage and
strength to face the site of so many bad memories together. However, Jim was indispensable at the station

>this morning. With the Commissioner visiting, Simon Banks had requested, or rather, demanded his presence.
Maybe Simon would understand if he called, saying he would be late by an hour or so? He knew Simon would

>understand. The devastation on the captain's face after the EMT had declared Blair's death had matched
Jim's. Although Banks hadn't started handling Blair with kid gloves, his concern for the young man was

>always evident.

>Jim pulled out his cell phone to make the call, but Blair's voice stopped him.

>"Could you let me out here, please?" he asked, his voice even and steady.

>"I have plenty of time, Chief. I can drive you the whole way," Jim said but, nevertheless, he stopped the
truck, steering the vehicle to the right side of the road. They were still about a mile away from Rainier.

>
For a moment, the silence hung between them. Jim sensed Blair's nervousness, his fear, the mental battle he >fought. The young man stared out of the windshield, one hand already gripping the door handle.

>"This is something I have to do alone, Jim," Blair explained, his pounding heart betraying his calm words.
"Believe me, I would rather have you with me but I need to do this." He looked at Jim. Just a short glance in

>his direction, not meeting his eyes. "I work there and I have to deal with thescene and the memories it
revives." He went silent.

>
The touch on Blair's arm was gentle. "You're not alone, Chief,"

Jim promised and patted his arm. He still
>didn't agree with Blair's decision but respected the wish.

>A smile tugged at Blair's mouth. "Thanks, Jim." He opened the door
and climbed out of the truck. He slammed
the door shut and waved.

>
"12.30, remember!" Jim shouted, grinning, as Blair turned around
once more and made the thumbs-up sign.
>
Jim's grin faded when the figure of his friend suddenly morphed
into a wolf. Yellow eyes glowing, the animal
>stared at the Sentinel, watching the startled man with keen
intelligence. Then, the wolf raised his head high
and howled.

>
Ellison jerked his door open and jumped out of the vehicle. He'd
ignored this vision once.
>
"Blair!" he yelled running towards the wolf.
>
Long brown curls flew in the breeze as the anthropologist
whirled around.
>
"What?"
>
A few feet away, Jim stopped in his tracks. The wolf had
vanished and Blair's questioning glance made him
>doubt his own eyes.

>"Nothing..." Jim replied. "Just....be there on time."

>***

>A few students greeted him with friendly remarks. A cheerful 'hi
there', 'good to see you again' or just a well-
meant nod warmed
Blair's heart as he walked the campus. A few glances cautiously
roamed over him and, if
>he'd the advantage of Jim's sensitive hearing, Blair would probably
be able to decipher the whispers behind
his back. Sandburg
returned the waves of fellow TAs and even stopped to speak to some
people.
>
"Hi, Mr. Sandburg!" Another student from a class he taught last
year.
>
Another wave. "Hello, Michael!"
>
Blair neared the building of Halgrove Hall where is office was
located. His heart rate sped up, and he felt it
>beating in his throat. When he walked around the corner, the police
observer heard the gentle burbling of
water. Concentrating his
view on his shoes, Blair took a few more tentative steps. The long
curls obscured his
>sight as the wind playfully tousled his hair. One hand clutched the
strap of his backpack and the other raked
through his unruly
mane.
>
The fountain was on.
>
Peacefully, the water pattered down in a soothing rhythm,
drawing little circles on the otherwise smooth
>surface. A few leaves from the trees and bushes around were swimming
on top of the water. From his point of
view, he still could see
the bottom through the murky water. It wasn't that deep.

>
Blair felt the slight spray moistening his face. The sensations
was as soft as velvet, and Blair closed his eyes
>for a moment to enjoy it.

>Suddenly, he fell forward. The sound of splashing thundered in his
ears while his mouth and nose filled with
cold water. The bottom
was a blue blur in front of him, and his lungs demanded oxygen he
couldn't give
>anymore. Swallowing water, little bubbles of wasted air danced to
the surface. Breathing became impossible,
the pain in his chest

unbearable.

>
With a start Blair opened his eyes! Involuntarily, he stepped back from the fountain, gasping, panting as the >too vivid remembrance of what had happened at this place only 90 days ago overwhelmed him. His hand
touched his chest as if he had to feel the breathing movement his lungs now performed so easily, so casually.

>His gaze was fixed on the fountain, and he felt paralyzed with the burden of memory. He stood perfectly
still, afraid if he moved, he would fall forward into the water....

>
...and drown.

>
Trying to calm himself, Blair took a few deep, cleansing breaths. He would've closed his eyes again but, >fearing another flashback, he didn't and instead just stared at a distant point. After a while, his heart found
its regular rhythm and his ragged breathing evened.

>
The anthropologist inhaled deeply again and, carefully, as if to check the ground's sturdiness, he took a step >backwards. A second followed and when Blair trusted his balance again, he started running towards the
anthro building. He climbed the stone stairs in a few long strides, crashing through the door like a bat out of

>hell. The wooden door fell shut behind him, and Blair heavily leaned against it.

>His office was down the hallway and around the corner on the left. How many times had he raced down
these hallways? Bumping into students, mumbling apologies, he had entered his office just to emerge

>moments later with a stack of books and notes. So many times and he'd never wasted a thought about it.
Why was it so difficult this time?

>
Maybe because the last time he had walked to his office he had not known where else to go.

>
You know where to find me.

>
His heart had ached with the pain of possibly losing a friend. With hopes high and strong that Jim would >follow shortly and talk to him, he had entered his office and waited. Unfortunately, the Sentinel had never
shown up. Well, that was only half the truth, Blair thought, while walking down the empty hallway. The

>Sentinel who did show up was the one he hadn't expected.

>Blair searched his backpack for the keys. His hands shook slightly as he turned the key and unlocked the door.

>***

>Jim Ellison knocked at the glass doors of his captain's office and was invited with a sharp "come in!". The
detective entered and found four pairs of eyes looking at him expectantly.

>
"Sorry I'm late," Jim apologized and met Simon Banks' questioning glance. "I had car problems," he lied easily >and nodded towards his colleagues, Megan Connor and Joel Taggart.

>"Commissioner O'Neill, I'd like you to meet Detective James Ellison of the Major Crimes division," Simon
introduced him to the elderly, gray-haired man sitting at the head of the table.

>
O'Neill stood up and the two men shook hands.

>
"Nice to meet you, Sir," Jim said and sat down beside Megan. He noticed how she threw a look at the now >closed office door as if expecting someone.

>"I've heard a lot about you, Detective," O'Neill said and smiled a false smile indicating he had heard nothing
more than what his industrious secretary had told him while serving his morning coffee.

>
Ellison returned the smile politely. "Thank you, Commissioner. I hope it was all good."

>
The people in Banks' office chuckled a bit at the joke and O'Neill nodded. "Certainly." He smiled again. "I've

>also learned you're working with a police observer?"

>Before Jim could answer, the captain jumped in to give the next words more authority and value. "Yes, Blair
Sandburg. He's a consultant to the department and I can safely say Major Crimes is fortunate to have him

>with us." Joel and Megan nodded their agreement, but Jim didn't comment. He stared at his hands. Lost in
thought, he brushed over the band aid on his finger.

>
"Is Mr. Sandburg here today?" the commissioner questioned and Simon nodded.

>
"Yes, sir, he must be in the bullpen working on..." he started when Jim interrupted him.

>
"Uhm, Mr. Sandburg is not here this morning," Jim announced, gaining a surprised and halfway startled look

>from Banks. "He has some business at the university to take care of and asked me to excuse him."

>O'Neill nodded again, understanding, but not really caring if he'd meet the police observer. Simon Banks,
however, stood up quickly, saying: "Would you excuse Detective Ellison and myself for minute?" Without

>offering an explanation he bored his eyes into Ellison and signaled him outside. Puzzled, the commissioner
raised his eyebrows but, before he could remark, Megan had involved him in a discussion.

>
"Back home in New South Wales we have...." was all Jim heard when he followed Simon outside.

>
The break room was empty. The glass doors clinked as Banks shut them a bit too hard, focussing on this

>detective with a searing glance.

>"Sandburg's at the university to take care of some business?"

Simon's voice sounded astonishingly calm, little
more than a whisper. It was so unlike him that Jim hurried to explain the morning's events.

>
"And you let him go?" Simon repeated, unbelieving and threatening at the same time. It was an accusation, a sharp warning not to make the same mistake again.

>"Yes, I respected his wish to do this on his own," Jim answered, his own tone daring his captain to start a new
discussion about responsibility and friendship. They had had enough of that during Blair's recovery at the

>hospital. Jim had never assumed to see such a vehement emotional reaction from his superior officer, but their
arguments had been loud and sometimes ugly. Pain had made them forget the respect they had for each other,

>and a few words were said both men regretted now.

>"I offered to go with him but he asked me not to," Jim continued, watching the grim expression of his captain.

>"Maybe you didn't insist hard enough!" Simon barked, not wanting to think about the mental anguish
Sandburg had to go through alone at this moment.

>
Ellison raised his hands and let them fall again. "With all due respect, sir, you are not this father."

>
"No, I'm not, Jim, but at least I let him know I care about him. It would be a good idea if you showed a little
bit more concern at times," Banks challenged, knowing already he'd hit a weak point. The moment he said it,
he also knew he was wrong.

>
Jim shrugged helplessly, a gesture of defeat. "Simon....," he began. He turned his back on the tall man, trying to
sort his thoughts, his feelings and fears. "I'm trying. But it seems like Blair's shutting me out. I'm not
surprised and I don't blame him. We talked about everything, believe me, and he's still the same babblebox he

>was...before," Jim struggled with the word 'before'. "He's not really saying what's bothering him. I know he's
scared at times and he has those terrible flashbacks, but I can't... when I'm offering comfort he shrinks away

>from my touch." The detective shook his head. "I...he trusts me with his life, I know that - otherwise he
wouldn't have come back to the station to work with me as my partner."

>
He went silent for a long time, and Simon was about to add his comment when Jim continued in a low voice.

>"Blair knows I'll save his life in a second, that I'll jump in the line of fire before he can blink, but...he doesn't
trust me with his heart anymore." The eyes he turned on Simon now were the sad eyes of an old man.

>
The captain walked over to Jim and put a comforting hand on the man's shoulder. "Jim, I'm sorry," he said. "I
>had no idea about all this. Blair needs time. You know that old saying time heals all wounds, and I know
deep in his heart he trusts you. But the kid just doesn't know how to show it."

>
The Sentinel nodded and tiredly rubbed his eyes. "You're probably right, Simon, but it's killing me to see him
>hurting." He looked out of the window.

>The wolf howled in anguish. Throwing his majestic head up, the sounds escaping his throat were filled with
pain. He turned towards Jim and the yellow eyes became two blue orbs. A hidden plea for help. The animal

>waited, seemingly expecting a move from the Sentinel. Getting no response though, the wolf cried again.
Then, he raced forward and threw himself into a raging sea.

>
Jim's head snapped up as the vision disappeared. He pushed Simon away who stumbled backwards, startled
>and nevertheless angry.

>"Ellison!" he shouted, but Jim had already yanked open the door, chased through the hall, taking the stairs to
the garage in a flash.

>
He had to find Sandburg.

>

>
The air was stuffy and a musty smell lingered in the room. Someone should've let some air in here from time to
>time, Blair thought, as he opened the windows and enjoyed the breeze coming from outside. He walked
around his desk and sat down, wondering what he was going to do. Like last time. He had been sitting

>behind the desk, just staring at the door and waiting for Jim. He had been too tensed up to work, and as his
hand now opened one of the desk drawers, Blair felt the same tension knotting his stomach.

>
In the drawer, he noticed small black folder containing the introductory chapter of his dissertation.

>
THE SENTINEL

>GENETICS, MYTHOLOGY AND ONTOLOGY
OF OUR TRIBAL PROTECTORS

>
by

>BLAIR SANDBURG

>
They surely had searched his office for evidence to catch Alex, and Jim had probably been on top of the

>investigation. Did he read this again? It didn't look any different from the last time he'd placed it there. After
all, Jim'd have had enough time without the threat of Blair suddenly showing up. Did Jim go through the

>rest of his stuff? His tapes or his computer? Maybe he'd listened to the tape and learned about Blair's
perceived conflict between the two sentinels?

>
Two sentinels. Blair sighed. What a great chapter it would make in his dissertation. A chapter of betrayal,

>anger and pain with the ultimate warning attached at the end: Listen to your heart, not to your head!

>"Well, I'd better make sure I'll never have to write it," Blair muttered and took the folder out of the desk
drawer. Without wasting another look at it, he threw it into the waste paper basket.

That chapter was

>closed.

>Inhaling deeply, Blair's lungs struggled as the air became thick. With the foulness of evil restricting his
breathing, the young man stood up at the drop of a hat. In a few strides he reached the door and walked out

>into the hallway.

>The deceptive beauty of the fountain greeted him again when he stepped out of Halgrove Hall. He shuddered
and quickly cast his eyes over his shoulder - an instinctive movement to make sure she wasn't walking behind

>him with a gun pointed at his back. He couldn't recall if she had talked to him or if he had said anything. The
only thing he recollects was the water rushing towards him in a huge wave.

>
"Hey, Blair!" The voice of Jack Kelso brought Blair back from the past and the anthropologist turned around >to greet his old friend. A genuine smile brightened his face.

>"Jack, it's nice to see you," Blair said cheerfully and extended his hand as the teacher of foreign affairs came
closer.

>
"Well, it's good to see you, too," Jack replied. The eyes behind his glasses sparkled with both intelligence and >sympathy. "Are you coming back this semester?" he asked.

>Blair nodded. "Yeah, I have to catch up on a lot of stuff, but I think I'll manage it." He went silent for a
moment, his smile faltering a bit. "I just wanted to see if the building's still here," he tried a joke.

>
Kelso returned the smile, but he spoke in a serious voice. "This place must stir a lot of unpleasant memories."

>
A pained laugh. "Yeah, but I don't think the university would grant me an office at the other end of Cascade."

>The jest was mixed with a look of panic. Without thinking, Blair continued: "Today's my first day back and I
wanted to do it alone. Jim offered to come with me but...but I didn't want him to see....this." He drew back

>his arm to gesture at the fountain. "He doesn't need to go through

this again. It's hard enough for me, and I
don't want him to suffer by asking him to hold my hand." The blue eyes reflected the pain Jack Kelso could

>hear in Blair's voice. "I'm an adult and have to deal with this. "

>Moving his wheelchair closer to the young teacher, Kelso gently touched Blair's arm. "You know I've learned
adult or not, there are a few things in our lives we should only do in the company of a friend. Good things

>and bad things."

>"Thanks, Jack," Blair said quietly.

>"What do you say we have lunch together today?" Jack suggested when he noticed Blair's features had
lightened up a bit.

>
Blair consulted his watch. "Well, Jim and I are going to have lunch today, but maybe we could meet for a cup

>of coffee or something in my office this afternoon?"

>"Sounds great," Jack agreed smiling.

>"Uh, I think I gotta go now, Jack. I wanted to take a walk through the park. Get some fresh air, you know?"

>The park was a green oasis connecting with the campus at the north side of the university. The students often
escaped there during lunch time or after school. Blair even sometimes held class in the park to wake the spirits

>or lighten the mood of his students.

>The two men said their good-byes, and a few minutes later Blair entered the park. At this early time of day
only a few people occupied the walkways. Most were elderly people, joggers and mothers with their little

>children. The lovely sounds of chirping birds reached Sandburg's ears accompanied by the mystical song of
rustling trees softly swaying in the wind.

>
Blair found his favourite spot and sat down on a bench by the lake. He had come here often because the place

>was just perfect for preparing a lecture or just relaxing and reading a book. Blair made himself comfortable on
the bench, his legs stretched out with his shoes drawing little patterns in the sand, his head facing the sun.

>The warm rays of sunshine caressed him. The scent of plants and flowers mingled with the pleasant breeze.
The peace of this place brought a feeling of safety, and Blair followed the urge to close his eyes and enjoy the

>wonders of nature. He dozed off.

>In the distance he heard sirens screaming. The sound was familiar and Blair knew he recognized it from
somewhere as it approached. He heard the screech of tires and pebbles jumping in protest on the gravel path.

>A door slammed shut, and at least two people started running. They seemed to approach him, but then the
sounds faded until...

>
"Oh my god!" Blair recognized the voice but could quite put a finger on the name belonging to it. Whomever it

>was came nearer and now another voice shouted an order.

>"Call an EMT! Now!"

>"H, give me a hand!" another order and somehow it sounded like Jim's voice. Water splashed, and someone,
Jim, yelled....his name.

"Sandburg!" Strong arms got a hold of his clothes and Blair felt himself lifted and

>dragged out of... out of what? He kept listening and his heart ached when he heard the pain edging the next
words.

>
"Get an ambulance over here!" Jim demanded. They shouted his name several times and then the voice of
>Simon Banks was near his ear.

>"I don't hear a heartbeat. Do you? Do you hear a heartbeat?!" The person in question didn't answer and then
he heard the name.
>"Jim? Jim!"
>
"No, nothing," came the devastating answer, and Blair wondered whom they were talking about. Maybe he
>could help them?

>Someone initiated mouth-to-mouth while Simon started counting in the rhythm of the cardiac massage "One,
two, three..."

>
"Breathe! Come on, Chief!" It was Jim who said that, Blair knew it now. And he knew what was happening.
>They were trying to save him. He had drowned at the fountain and his friends had come to rescue him.

>"Let's go again!" Simon's voice ordered and Blair's ears picked up the strain while the captain continued the
massage. Three, four, five...
>
"Breathe, damnit!!" Blair flinched at the aggressive sound of Ellison's voice. He wanted to breathe; he
>struggled for air that wouldn't come.

>He was breathing now. Didn't Jim sense it?

>Sirens screamed again. "Give us room, guys!" a stranger's voice requested. "Check his pulse," another added. The
efforts to revive him continued. Between the chaos of medical treatment and hurried orders, Jim's pain->stricken voice again whispered his prayer.

>"This can't be happening." Then again: "This can't be happening." And again.

>"Come on, Chief." The order became frantic.

>"Sandburg." Just a whisper from Simon.

>"Come on, buddy, come on." Nothing more than a plea, and then the paramedic announced the unthinkable.
"I'm sorry, guys." His voice is full of regret and sorrow, and Blair was wondering how Jim would react.
>
An Australian accent reached his hearing. "Oh, Sandy," and Blair was surprised to see Megan there, too.
>What was happening?

>"What do you mean sorry?!" The Sentinel yelled. "This isn't over!"

>The next thing Blair heard was a heart-wrenching "NOOOOOOOOO!" It echoed in his head as well as coming
from the outside. In his head it had been Jim's voice, painful as he suffered through a terrible ordeal.
>But...where did that female voice come from? Blair wondered.

>"NOOOOOOOOOOO!" The scream put Blair's teeth on edge and he jerked awake. His heart raced as the
memory of the dream still ravaged his body. He took a deep breath and shook his head to clear his brain. He
>was still sitting on the bench in the park, but the scene had changed dramatically.

>A woman he'd heard before screamed again, and Blair jumped to his feet. She stood at the bank of the lake,
her arm pointing to a spot on the water. "HELP!" she shouted, her eyes searching for anyone nearby. Blair ran
>toward her, while his gaze roamed over to the point she was indicating. His heart almost stopped when he
discovered the body of a little child floating in the water.

>
The woman saw him coming. "Please...my daughter....I can't swim....she must've fallen...Please, help me!" She dropped to her knees, crying, her hands covering her mouth. She was on the edge of panic.
>Surprisingly calm, Blair fumbled in his pocket and produced his cell phone. A shiver ran through his body
when he repeated the words he'd just heard moments ago. "Call an EMT!" he ordered sharply, handing off the phone before he stormed towards the lake.
>He shrugged out of his jacket and shoes and propelled himself into the water. This was probably a bad idea.
The strange thought came to mind while Blair swam towards the girl. He had never rescued someone from the water, and the chances were good they would both drown in the effort. However, he had to try. He had to
fight for the girl's life as much as Jim had fought for his. The water splashed on his face and he the weight of his clothes tugged at him the longer he swam. He could already feel the strain in his muscles.
>Blair reached the limp form of the child and pulled her into his arms.
>"Hey, hey, can you hear me?" he asked breathlessly, kicking the water while he turned onto his back, the girl
lying against his chest. Receiving no answer, Blair wasted no time in starting back to the bank. Sirens penetrated the silence of the park and Blair sighed in relief at the sound. Holding onto the girl with one hand,
the anthropologist crawled through the water with his other. He had lost track of the distance he'd covered, >and he felt his body weakening with each stroke. Hearing the voices and shouts of pedestrians, Blair
concluded he was near the shore.

>
Suddenly, strong hands grabbed Blair's shoulders, and then, the girl was pulled out of his arms. "I've got her, >Chief," Jim announced calmly, and Blair looked up into the concerned blue eyes of his Sentinel friend.
>"She's not responding," Blair gasped.
>"Just take it easy, Blair," Jim said while they both swam back to the bank. Relieved from the additional
weight of the little body, Blair's movements became stronger again. Jim could see the exhaustion on his young friend's face though. "If you can't go on or your muscles start cramping, just stop and tread water," the
detective suggested. "I'll come back for you." >
Blair nodded. "Go on, Jim," he panted. >
"Keep breathing, okay?" Jim said and his motions became faster, reluctantly leaving his friend behind. But he had to save the girl's life. If she didn't get medical attention fast... Ellison banned the thought and soon, he
felt the solid ground of the bank under his feet. >
Paramedics helped him up and took care of the girl. "How long has she been under water?" the first medic asked. Jim shrugged. "I don't know." He turned his attention to the young woman. "Ma'am?"
>"A...few minutes....," she stammered. "Three or five maybe....I...didn't...notice." She fell down her knees beside
the medics and helplessly watched the attempts to revive her daughter. >
Jim turned on his heel and threw himself into the water again to help Blair. Thankfully, the young man had

>almost reached safety and all Jim had to do was support his exhausted body. Blair collapsed on the sand,
coughing up water he had swallowed.

>
"You okay, Chief?" Jim knelt beside his Guide, tenderly patting his back until the coughing subsided. "Easy.

>Just try to breathe normally."

>"How's the girl?" Blair asked when he got his breathing under control.

>"The paramedics are working on her," Jim replied.

>Blair moved on his knees, his hair falling into his forehead. "Go....go...maybe you can help them," he said, and,
seeing Jim's hesitation, he assured: "I'm okay."

>
The efforts of the EMTs were finally rewarded with a sharp intake of breath and a cough! The little girl

>started crying at the sight of so many strangers surrounding her. Her mom gently gathered her into her arms,
soothing and comforting her with whispered words. The paramedics smiled in relief, and Jim nodded in

>return.

>The Sentinel turned his attention to Blair who had found the strength to get to his feet. The young man stood
a few feet away, hugging himself against the now chilly wind. Like Jim's, his clothes were soaked with water

>and the detective could see the tremors wracking his slight body.

>"Hey, Chief, what do you say we get you into something dry and warm?" Jim's gentle smile faded when he
noticed the haunted look on Sandburg's face. The blue eyes were wide with pain and the trauma of the events

>he'd just witnessed along with those he only had a vague memory of.

>"Blair?" Jim hurried to his side and put a hand on his shoulder.

"Are you okay?" he repeated his earlier
question.

>
The long, wet curls moved when the anthropologist slowly nodded.

"Yeah....I'm fine, Jim," he said. "Do you

>know what's really funny, man?" he asked then, his gaze concentrating on the lake.

>"What's that, Chief?"

>Big blue eyes filled with tears, but no sob escaped Blair's throat as he replied: "What Lash started... Alex
finally perfected." The following joyless laugh broke the Sentinel's heart. The first tears started trickling down

>Blair's face, and Jim pulled him closer into a hug. Hesitantly, like he was afraid of displaying his feelings so
openly, Blair's arms came around Jim's waist. Jim could feel the tremors running through Blair's body as he

>sobbed against his chest.

>"It's okay," Jim soothed. "Let it out, Chief, let it out." He stroked the damp bunch of curls while he spoke. "I'm
here. I always will be."

>
With his face still buried into Jim's shirt, Blair nodded. His arms tightened and the embrace became almost

>painful.

>After all, the chapter wasn't closed.

>The end.

>DannyD
July 1998

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End
file.